

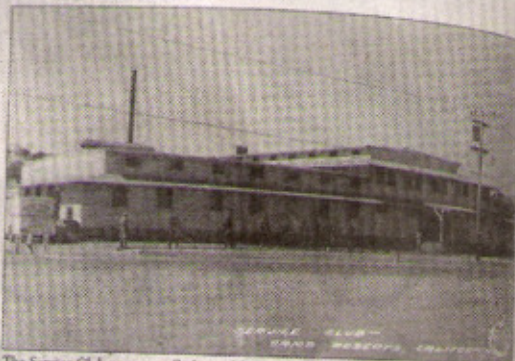
BOOKS & MORE

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2005

THE TRIBUNE

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The Service Club was centrally located between the Field Artillery and Infantry units and fronted the Infantry Parade Ground. The Service Club had a fully equipped library, a pin-ball machine, a soda fountain, a cafeteria, and a lounge. A second Service Club was located in the East Garrison. Also in this area was one of the camp's theaters, the bowling alley, swimming pool, tennis courts, athletic field, and the camp's sports arena.



Each regimental area had its own recreational hall or company day room, which was well equipped with books, current magazines and newspapers, billiard and ping-pong tables, and drink dispensers.



Four theaters, each seating 1,038 men, brought the latest motion pictures to Camp Roberts. The admission price was only 25¢.



The camp's sports arena was located at the northwest corner of the parade ground and was fully equipped for basketball, boxing, weightlifting, badminton, and wrestling.

Camp Roberts in black and white

Publisher of historical books turns its attention to the WWII training ground — and tells the story of the namesake who never returned from the front

By PATRICK S. PEMBERTON
THE TRIBUNE

Corporal Harold Roberts knew only one man would make it out alive.

After his tank fell into a flooded crater, water quickly began pouring in. Instead of rushing out himself, Roberts looked at his gunman and said, "Well, only one of us can get out" before shoving his comrade out the tank's back door.

The 19-year-old Roberts drowned in France that day, becoming one of more than five million Allied soldiers who died in battle during World War I.

Roberts would be posthumously awarded several medals, and two decades later, one of the nation's largest military camps would bear his name.

The story of the fallen sol-

dier is a fitting beginning to "Camp Roberts," a new installment from Arcadia Publishing (\$20). Arcadia, which has over 3,000 titles, from "Cemeteries of Santa Clara" to "Italians in Detroit," chronicles American history with its collections of black-and-white photos.

The opening photos from "Camp Roberts," compiled by the California Center for Military History, show a quiet, sparsely populated Nacimientito Ranch, first owned by an American named George

Flint. With open fields that seemed ideal for rifle ranges, the land caught the military's attention in 1901. But with its hot climate, at least one physician thought the ranch was a poor prospect, saying it would be "a cruel injustice to our soldiers" to have them train there.

However, when the United States became involved in World War II, it quickly became apparent that more bases were needed, and fast. So in 1940, the federal government purchased land at Nacimientito Ranch, giving it the lengthy moniker "Camp Nacimientito Replacement Training Center."

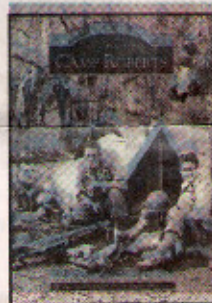
Despite torrential rains, the government's goal of constructing a camp in four months was achieved, and troops began arriving in March of 1941. Not long before it opened, it was renamed Camp Roberts.

Arcadia's "Camp Roberts," like its predecessor "Camp San Luis Obispo," is chock-full of old photos (each Arcadia book typically features more than 200). Some of them are stale, like snapshots of anonymous crowds in front of buildings, and many lack dates that would give a historical context.

But shots of soldiers in training, getting married on the base or watching movies offer a glimpse into what life was like during wartime. While most of those soldiers are anonymous, readers will quickly recognize the faces of Bob Hope, Judy Garland and Joe Louis (who performed there), along with Red Skelton

and Robert Mitchum (who trained there as draftees).

Those names will always be more recognizable than Roberts's. But the soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice has one lasting distinction: Camp Roberts is currently the only military base named after an enlisted man. Looking at the photos of other enlisted men in "Camp Roberts," you can't help but wonder which ones — like Roberts — went off to war and never made it back alive.



"Camp Roberts"

Arcadia
Publishing

\$20

Uncork the

Veterans Day Weekend, Nov. 1

Help us honor our armed forces with wine tasting for all U.S. veterans.

Beaujolais Nouveau Weekend

Celebrate the first wine of vintage with a light supper served 5:30pm (complimentary to wine club members). Reservations required.

Thanksgiving Weekend, Nov. 2

Open Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Closed Thanksgiving Day.